

# FANTOMAS

## "THE CROOK DETECTIVE"

Fantomas, this was the name given to all unpunished, mysterious crimes in Paris, due to the many exploits of the phantom crook. The press tired of writing concerning crimes it could not explain, centered the matter in one of the leading papers, which said:

"Does Fantomas, exist? Yes, because he is committing new crimes, every day. Who is Fantomas? Why is he not arrested? The question can be answered in a few words:

"Fantomas the phantom crook, Fantomas, who always escapes at the right time, Fantomas, the elusive is simply an invention of Detective Inspector Juve, while many believe that Juve and Fantomas are one and the same person."

The powers interested, understood they had to satisfy public opinion, and in this method showed themselves exceedingly clever. Juve was ordered to appear immediately before the examining magistrate, and did so with a calm conscience. Juve, deserted by his superior officers, was committed to a cell in spite of his strong defense. When Fandor, his journalist friend, learned the astonishing news, he said to himself, "If they really on appearances, and if Juve is jailed, merely to give satisfaction to idiots, they must naturally consider me his accomplice. By keeping at liberty, I can defend my friend, and will therefore take to cover."

Fandor left a note on his desk, which was found by the police the next morning, which read as follows:

"TO THE POLICE—  
I know you have it in for me, like you have for my friend Juve. Excuse me for not staying to be arrested, but with Juve in jail, it is better for me to be free to work for him, so justice may be done."

JEROME FANDOR

In the Belleville quarter of Paris, lived "Father Moche," who loaned small sums of money, and pretended to be a lawyer. He owned the house in which he lived, and had a good reputation, though some of his tenants had had trouble with the police.

On October 15th, a collector called and collected \$1200. At last, I am through with my work for to-day," remarked the collector. "I have only one more floor to climb and that will be all."

"Another bill to collect in this house, from what family?" asked Father Moche.

"From Mr. Paulet."

The collector went away, and Father Moche closed the door carefully. Paulet was a desperate looking chap, and his companion was worthy of him, although only 16 years old, she was already a criminal. Her name was Nini Guion.

As the bill collector knocked at the door, Paulet stood at one side holding an upraised hammer. The bill collector made one step into the narrow entrance, when Paulet brought the hammer down with full force upon the head of his victim, who sank to the floor, his head crushed by the blow.

Father Moche, hearing the fall of the body rushed upstairs and into the room. Paulet and Nini were washing their hands in the kitchen; on a chair near them, was the collector's wallet, crammed with bank notes and drafts. Without hesitation, Father Moche, seized the wallet, and before Nini or Paulet could stop him, ran out of the room.

After entering his own room, Father Moche, locked the wallet and contents in his safe. The bell rang and he opened the door, a young woman was standing there holding out a letter to him. It read,

Dear Sir: This is the new tenant for your fifth floor, she wishes one room divided by a partition, for she finds it too large.

DOULLENQUE

Father Moche assured his visitor that he would do as she wished. Just then Paulet and Nini rushed into the room, demanded their money back. Moche only rubbed his hands and laughed. Paulet whipped out his knife, but Moche seized his arm, twisting it until the knife flew out of his hand; with his other hand he seized Nini by her throat, forcing her to her knees. The man and woman looked at the old man frozen with terror. "You idiots," Father Moche stormed, "you are working like fools, the corpse will be found, and you will be punished. Obey my orders and I will rescue. Tonight the proof of your crime will be so well hidden that months will elapse before it is discovered, if ever." "Tom Bob," the famous American detective has just arrived in Paris with the intention of discovering the truth about Fantomas.

The detectives received orders to extend every courtesy to their American confederate, should he present himself to them. However, Tom Bob, did not

make himself known.

Moche had had the partition put in for his new tenant, and the paper hanger had just come to place his first roll of paper, when his boss arrived. He wore a muffler, long white blouse and soft white hat, under which you could see eyes of extreme shiftiness. He discharged his workman, then took a long nail, and drove it in the partition in a spot he seemed to know well.

From the nail hole, a black liquid began to run. The man watched the bleeding wall for a few moments, when the new tenant came in, and beheld the stream of blood which was continuing to flow. The poor woman was on the point of fainting, but the man did not give her time.

"Hurry, go get the police," he ordered.

She rushed away, soon returning, with two officers and a detective. "What's this story about a bleeding wall?" demanded the detective.

He was shown the blood dripping from the wall, so he commanded the detectives to make a hole, which soon revealed the corpse of a man, who proved to be the missing collector.

The detective turned to the man who had driven the nail, demanding to know who he was, and how he came to drive the nail in that spot. Instead of replying, the man handed a card to the astonished detective.

TOM BOB,

American Detective,  
Hotel Terminus, Paris.

The detectives manner changed, he was gratified to be the first to come in contact with the American detective, engaged in his duties.

A few days after the discovery of the corpse of the collector, Lady Beltham, who it will be remembered, had been ensnared by Fantomas, had not disappeared, but through marriage, had become the Grand Duchess Alexandra. She thought herself secure from pursuit by the adventurer in whose crime she had been implicated.

As she sat one day in her drawing room, a card was brought to her, reading Tom Bob, American Detective. No sooner had he appeared in the door way than she started back with a shriek.

The so-called American detective, was no other than Fantomas. "Good morning," he bowed in irony, "We have not seen each other for some time."

He was not long coming to the point. He wanted money and forced the Duchess to start a huge subscription for the purpose of capturing Fantomas. This she did with fear and trembling.

Fandor in the meantime had retired to a suburb not far out of town. He stopped at a small hotel, confident that the examining magistrate was not really anxious to capture him.

Fandor arranged a custom of black, said to be the favorite dress of Fantomas himself.

The Duchess was giving a grand ball, when she spied a familiar and dreaded figure in black among the masqueraders—but she felt it was not really Fantomas. She was scarce over her surprise when a second man in black stood before her. She knew too, this was not Fantomas and her mystification was complete. As she turned it was only to see a third figure in black—this time she recognized the terrible Fantomas, he gazed sternly at her through his mask, his deep eyes blazing. As quickly as he had come he disappeared after a low bow.

"What is he going to do?" asked the Duchess of herself.

When dancing was at its height the Duchess found herself forced to dance with one of the men in black. As she danced she was jostled by a figure in black—it was Fantomas. The two men accosted each other with heated words. They then left for the huge gardens surrounding the palace.

A scream came from the dark. Fandor in the garden saw Fantomas appear and go toward the palace. Then Fandor rushed to a dark figure on the ground. It was a detective from headquarters with a huge dagger thrust in his breast.

Fandor summoned the police, who after investigation announced that "if Fantomas had really done the deed—then Juve must have been out of his cell the night before, and as Fantomas, or the assassin had been wounded in the arm, Juve must bear such a wound at this time."

It was thus easy to prove Juve guilty or innocent. Upon entering the cell, they found Juve asleep—he was under the influence of a powerful drug. He was awakened with great difficulty.

"Hold out your right arm," said the chief of police. Juve did so with difficulty, to their amazement there was a deep wound on his arm. Juve astounded asked the chief of police to summon all the keepers who had been on duty the night before.

Juve scrutinized the assembled

keepers, suddenly he sprang upon a burly fellow.

"Arrest this man, it is Nibet, the accomplice of Fantomas."

Nibet's attitude told of his guilt. A search revealed upon him a vial of narcotics and a blood stained knife. Thereupon Juve was re-instated in the detective force with full honors. He was determined to make Fantomas pay the penalty of his many crimes.

Fandor was still in hiding in the suburbs, and walking one day, in a wooded path came upon a typical band of "Apaches" who were quarreling violently. He stole up in the bushes and overheard their words. They were heaping abuse on an old man who stood calm, as one ugly looking chap shook his fist under his nose.

"As true as my name is Paulet, I am going to kill you, Father Moche, if you don't bring the money."

Moche seemed undisturbed—he drew out a paper and read:

"Pals—Have faith. All will be well. Trust Father Moche while I am in prison. When free I shall distribute the money.—Fantomas."

The Apaches read the letter and were convinced now that Juve and Fantomas were the same, since Juve really was in prison.

Fandor knew that Juve had been released, and after allowing the Apaches to disperse, Fandor watched Moche as he unearthed an iron box and took it to a ramshackle building. Fandor followed Moche and saw him hide the box, but when he would have emerged from the house found himself prisoner.

Juve, that very morning, was in conference with the examining magistrate, when several workmen, helping in remodeling the building, entered the room and overpowered the magistrate and Juve. They placed Juve in a bag lowered him from the window and drove him off in an automobile. On the seat Paulet turned to his companion, with a chuckle.

"Well, we have him, now for our money."

Fandor in the basement of the deserted building heard the tramping of feet overhead, then there was a scuffling on the stairway as the pretended workmen lifted Juve down in the bag in which he was tied.

They untied the sack, out stepped Juve to face a sinister ring of faces.

"Are you Juve, or are you Fantomas," cried the ringleader, Paulet. Juve was backed up against a huge cask under which Fandor had crawled; as Juve hesitated in his reply he heard Fandor's whispered words, "It is I, Fandor, tell them you are Fantomas, under the dark stone is money to satisfy them. Give it to them."

Juve looked at Paulet. "Unbind me and you shall have your money," he said in a calm voice. The man did his bidding and Juve directed them where to find the box. As they were disputing over the division of the money, a cry from the lookout, "Beat it the cops," caused them to whirl, but too late. There was a short, hard fight and the gang was captured and bound and led away to meet French justice.

The gang had been betrayed by Tom Bob, the crook detective to get rid of all his accomplices at one blow. But Tom Bob and Father Moche, both in

reality Fantomas—had disappeared. Juve and Fandor however felt, that with much of his ill-gotten gains taken over by the police, Fantomas would make one more daring attempt to recoup his fortunes before disappearing entirely.

Fandor recalled the past connections between Lady Beltham and Fantomas.

"Juve," he remarked, as they sat in the journalist room, "I have a feeling there is some strange connection between that big subscription being gathered by the Duchess Alexandra and Fantomas. You recall he had a terrible hold over her. The subscription now amounts to a large amount. Wouldn't it be possible for Fantomas to go after it?"

"You are right," cried Juve. "The very idea I had in mind. We will go to the palace tonight and await the developments. We need no extra help as Fantomas is now working alone."

That night as the Duchess was reading in her bedroom she heard a noise at the window, turning she beheld the devilish leer of Fantomas.

His crafty eyes shot menace at every glance, her screams were choked back, for a huge pistol was leveled at her head. Fantomas was in his black suit. He sprang into the room, advancing to the terrified woman, he bent over her.

"My dear, you have succeeded very nicely with the subscription to capture me. I need a lot of money—hand over the money and all of your jewels."

The Duchess started to protest but Fantomas clutched her bare shoulder with a grip of steel, she gave in. As Fantomas pocketed the case of banknotes little did he know that stern fate was at his heels.

Little did he think that he was in the clutches of the men whom he had so often eluded and escaped from. Fantomas after taking all of the jewels and money in sight, stopped over the crouching woman before him.

"You used to kiss me—you were mine once—now kiss me good-bye for the last time." She threw out a protesting hand, but he crushed her down, as his lips were about to meet hers, a voice of steel rang out:

"Hands up!"

Fantomas whirled—in the window was framed the stern face of the master detective, his eyes aglow with triumph, he held a leveled revolver at the heart of the crook. In the mirror Fantomas spied, behind him, Fandor advancing also with a revolver. He knew the game was up.

It is six in the morning—the sky has turned from pink to red—the blood color that has so long surrounded Fantomas in his terrible career.

A bell tolls mournfully—by the prison wall a scaffold shades the

scene, but there is a swift flash as the rising sun strikes the descending blade, a soft thud as a head drops into the basket ready for it.

Justice has triumphed and Paris breathes free once more.

Fantomas has gone to his last reward.

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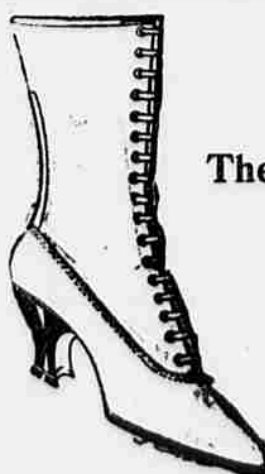
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